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CHECKING FLOODED ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

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Before entering a dwelling or building that has been flooded or damaged by strong winds, make sure there are no broken power lines in the immediate area. Do not touch fallen wires or metal parts of the building, such as the roof or gutters which are in contact with power lines. Contact your power supplier to advise him of the situation. If possible, turn off the gas before entering a damaged home. Use a flashlight, if needed, instead of matches, candles, or other open-flame light sources. In areas that have been flooded, be especially alert for poisonous snakes.

If the ground or the floors are still damp, approach flooded or wet equipment with caution. Turn off the main switch and disconnect appliances and equipment before checking them. Stand on a dry board when turning off any switch or pull the handle with a dry stick. Use extreme caution because electrical leakage may occur if the switchbox is filled with mud or debris.

Motors, switches, outlets and junction boxes that have been flooded or wet should be dried and cleaned before they are used. Clean dirt and debris from load center panels, switches and outlets and leave them open to dry. If possible, allow motors to stand a day or two to make sure they are dry.

The presence of water inside the motor may cause it to "short" and burn out, requiring an expensive rewinding job or total replacement. After the equipment has been dried and allowed to stand long enough to be free of moisture, it may be checked by connecting with the power source. If an appliance or motor blows a fuse or trips the circuit breaker, you can assume that the trouble is serious and the equipment should be disconnected immediately. Obtain a competent service man for further work on the motor or appliance.

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SM-7-73

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